

STONE-WORSHIP.

BY THE EDITOR.

STONES are the oldest monuments of religious worship. We cannot say that primitive man worshipped stones, but we know that he regarded some stones with awe as marking the place of theophanies or revelations. Pillars were erected to serve as bethels, or houses of God, and stones were piled up in heaps or put up in the form of trilithons, sometimes circles of trilithons, to serve as monuments or memorials.

Stone-worship is common still among some tribes of the American Indians, and we know that in spite of the crudity of their views their sentiments are marked by a deep-seated religious awe. Those who try to trace the psychology of it, discover at the bottom of this primitive form of worship the groping after a purer and more spiritual faith, for which the untrained mind of the savage is not yet capable of finding a proper expression.

Pillars, stone piles and cromlechs serve idolatrous purposes among the tribes of the islands of the South Sea and also on the Dark Continent; and if we consider that the most ancient prehistoric monuments in European countries are an unequivocal evidence that the Teutons, the Celts, the Slavs, the Mongolians, and also the Semites must, at some time or another, have practiced stone-worship, we come to the conclusion that at a certain phase of man's religious development it must have been all but universal all over the world. We find traces of it preserved in that greatest store-house of religious documents, the Bible. We read in the Old Testament how the Patriarchs set up stones to commemorate a remarkable dream, or a treaty, or some other great event, and Yahveh is even in later times called "the Rock of the Covenant."

Considering the importance of this primitive mode of faith, we shall try to sketch its most characteristic features in order to understand the significance of this peculiar religious attitude.

We shall devote special attention to the stone-worship of the Semites because a comprehension of their religious views will throw



CROMLECH.

Five miles west of Castle Wellan, County of Downe.

much light upon some passages of the Bible which incorporate most ancient traditions of the patriarchal age.

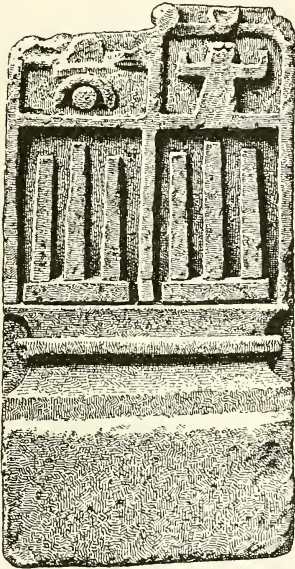
THE RELIGION OF THE PHŒNICIANS.

On the site of Phœnician cities, we find great heaps of stones with crude inscriptions and representations of Baal or Astarte or mere stone idols, representing the deity.

Not having any documents, books, or detailed descriptions of Phœnician life, we are limited in our judgment of Phœnician religion entirely to the remnants of statuary and other monuments

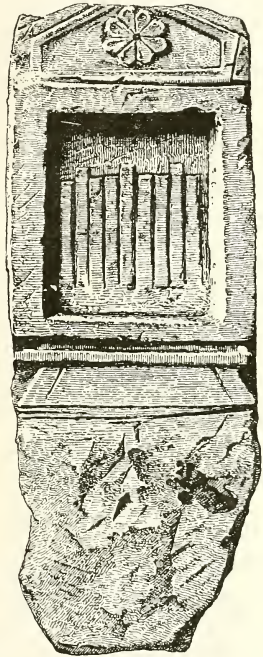
discovered on the site of Phœnician towns, which we have to interpret partly from the stray comments of Greek and Roman authors, and partly from our knowledge of Egyptian, Assyrian, Libyan, and Jewish institutions.

From some of these relics, commonly called "votive tablets," we learn that the people of Phœnician blood, whenever venturing



VOTIVE TABLET OF CARTHAGE.

Dedicated to Baal and Astarte, both represented as triads.

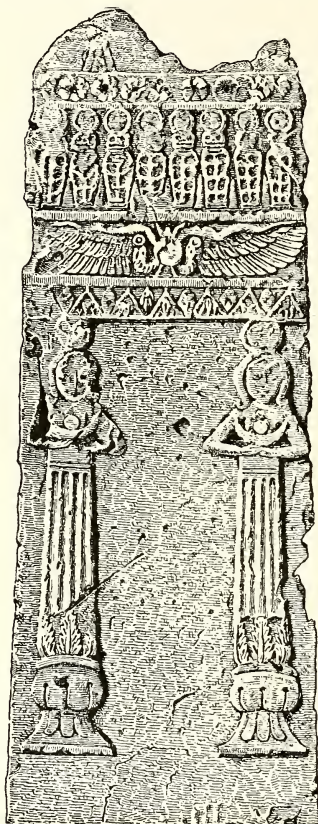


VOTIVE STONE OF HADRUMETUM.

Representing the ennead or the sacred "three times three."

on a long journey or some dangerous enterprise, were in the habit of praying to Baal or to Astarte for success, and if their prayer was granted, the divine favor was duly acknowledged in a tablet as a remembrance for all time to come. We reproduce here the pictures of a few of these monuments which are found in great quantities in Carthage, Hadrumetum and other Phœnician colonies. They are

instructive, for they allow us an insight into the religious spirit of the Phœnicians, which we must interpret by passages of the Old Testament as so many Beth-Els, set up in gratitude and pious devotion.



VOTIVE SLAB OF HADRUMENTUM.

The two pillars are here changed into columns, both bearing the effigy of Astarte.

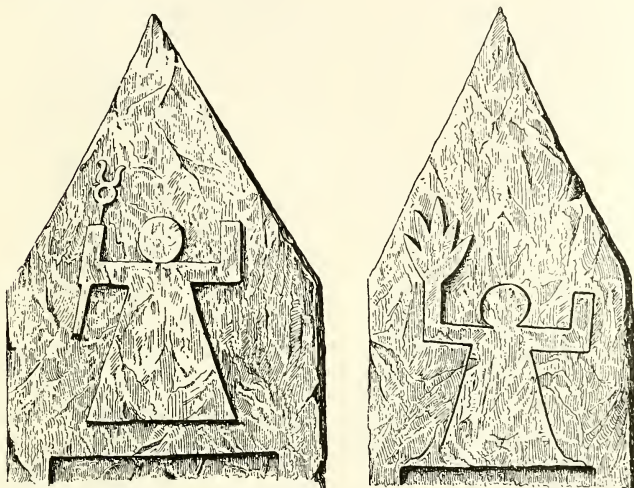
Judging from the stones, we come to the conclusion that the Phœnicians just as much as other nations of Asia and Egypt believed in the trinitarian god-conception, for the stone pillars which here are no longer unhewn but cut in the shape of obelisks appear frequently as triads, which now and then are trebled into an Ennead, or ninehood of pillars. The idea that each triad in its turn constitutes another triad was systematically worked out in Egypt in the theological system of Hierapolis, which was recognised as orthodox, and is preserved still in freemasonry where on the ground of an ancient tradition, "three times three" is regarded as the sacred number.

The word Baal¹ means "ruler" or "lord" and is frequently used in Hebrew in the sense of "proprietor of a house," "husband of a wife," "citizen of a town," "officer of the arrows," "patron" of wisdom or of vice, etc. In the ancient Hebrew of prehistoric

times the word must have been used frequently with reference to God as is apparent from such names of towns as Baal Gad, "God

¹The proper transcription of בַּאֵל would be *Ba'al*.

of good luck;" Baal-Hammon (Song of Songs viii. 11), a town where King Solomon owned a vineyard; Baal Hatsor (2 Sam. xii. 23) in the boundaries of Ephraim; Baal-Hermon (Judges iii. 3, and 2 Chron. v. 23), a town on Mount Hermon; Baal-Me'on (Jer. xlviii. 23, Ez. xxv. 9, Jos. xiii. 17), a town of the tribe of Reuben; Baal-Peratsim (2 Sam. v. 20), where David slew the Philistines; Baal-Shalehah (1 Sam. ix. 4), in Ephraim; Baal-Thamar near Gibeon (Judges xx. 33); Baale-Judah, i. e., the lords (i. e., the gods) of Judah (1 Chron. xiii. 6); etc.



BAAL HAMMON ON VOTIVE STONES.

Found at Cirta, the present Constantine, Algiers. On one of the stones the god holds in his hand a branch, the symbol of vegetation and the rejuvenescence of life, on the other the wand of Hermes, representing the solar disc surmounted by the crescent, an emblem that later on, when no longer understood, was misinterpreted as two intertwined serpents.

In Phœnician the word Baal means "Lord" in the same sense in which our Bible version still uses the word *adonai* (אֲדֹנָי), either for God the Father, or God the Son. Thus Baal may mean Baal-Hammon, identified by the Greeks with Zeus, or Melkarth the Baal of Tyre (מֶלְכָּרְתַּח בְּעֵר צִי) identified with the Greek Heracles.

Originally there was no difference between *adon* and *ba'al*; but when the word Ba'al came to denote the god of the Phœnicians,

the Hebrew used exclusively the word *adonai* (my Lord). Yet *adon* remained a synonym of Tammuz, and the Greek admitted to the Greek Pantheon the Phœnician god under the name *Adonis*.

In Phœnicia and Phœnician colonies, we find frequent compositions with the name Baal, thus Hani-Baal (חַנִּי בַּעַל) means "the grace of Baal." As Johannes (יְהוֹנָתָן) means "Yahveh is gracious," so an Edomite king was called "Baal-hanan," i. e., "Baal is gracious."

There are many allusions to the Baal cult of the Phœnicians in the Bible, especially to the holocausts or burnt offering of human victims, and we learn that Baal was worshipped under different cognomens as the "Baal of the covenant" (בַּעַל בְּרִית) (Judges viii. 33 and ix. 4), also called "God (אל) of the covenant" (אל בְּרִית) (v. 46). Baal-Zebub (בַּעַל זְבוּב), the lord of the flies, is a deity whose festival fell in the month when the insects disappear, and so he was represented in a myth as the great fly-catcher, which performance must have been one of the labors which the sun-god, the Phœnician Heracles, performs in his migration over the earth, and this name became among the Jews a common designation for Satan.¹

From the votive tablets of Carthage, we reproduce one that is interesting in more than one respect. The inscription which stretches over the middle of the slab reads:

"To the Lady Tanit-Pene-Baal, and to the Lord Baal-Hammon, in redemption of his vow Abdeshmun, son of Shafet."

Underneath the inscription is a peculiar religious symbol which according to some archæologists takes the place of the Egyptian "key of life." On either side hovers a dove, the bird sacred to Astarte. Above the inscription we see Astarte, the Lady of the countenance of Baal, holding in her hand the symbol of her divinity, a disc within a crescent.

We have no information why Tanit-Astarte was with preference called "of the countenance of Baal," but we need not seek for a far-fetched explanation. *Pene* (or Hebrew פָּנֶה = countenance) means also affection. When in Aaron's blessing, God lifts his countenance upon the congregation, it means that God looks upon the people with kindness, that he loves them, and they possess his favor.² Thus the lady of the countenance of Baal is the goddess beholden by Baal; the one whom he loves and cherishes.

The goddess appears in the shape which later on Christian

¹ The word is used by Christ in Matt. x. 25.

² Cf. Delitzsch, *Babel and Bible*, 2d edition, pp. 29 f. and pp. 153-155.



ABDESHMUN'S MEMORIAL STONE

Found in Carthage, bearing a dedication to Tanit Pene Baal.

artists gave to angels; the arch above her represents the heavens; on either side stands a pillar which here assumes the shape of a shepherd's crook.

On the top of the slab appears a hand symbolising Providence, the dispensation of Baal-Hammon (the Phœnician name for the Egyptian Ammon), the supreme god and ruler of the universe, corresponding to the Christian God the Father, and it is noteworthy that the symbol of the out-stretched hand, also used as an emblem on top of Roman standards, remained a symbol of Providence among Christian artists almost down to the present day.